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the educational background that allowed him to succeed in America and the limited opportunities which made his emigration necessary. Although DeRosier does not engage openly in broader historiographical debates concerning eighteenth-century Scotland, this book does make a contribution to them. In recent years many claims, occasionally absurd, have been made about the importance of Scotland to the 'invention' of the modern world. William Dunbar's life gives us a sense for both the promise and limits of such an interpretation. The story of how a middle-aged Scotsman from Elgin ended up leading an expedition to the future state of Arkansas on behalf of the United States is fascinating. That he had been, by turns, a British subject, and Spanish subject (and office holder), before becoming an American citizen and leading the expedition tells us much about the fluidity of identity and borders in the eighteenth century. He took little more than his Aberdeen education with him when he emigrated and made good in America, a citizen in the Republic of Letters long before he became a citizen of the United States. His achievements were not solely down to his Scottishness, however. In DeRosier's account of Dunbar's survey of the border between West Florida and Mississippi (a feat ultimately more significant than the Ouachita expedition) the party encountered Creek Indians whose land was being divided and much of the hard labour of hacking of boundary through the wilderness was supplied by Dunbar's African slaves. If Scots, like Dunbar, invented the modern world, or at least Mississippi, they did so by dint not only of their native genius but through the blood, sweat and toil of others.

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FRANK COGLIANO
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Land and Nation in England: Patriotism, National Identity, and the Politics of Land, 1880–1914.

By Paul Readman. Pp. xiv, 242.

ISBN: 9780861932979.

Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008. £50.00.

This excellent monograph in the Royal Historical Society's Monograph Series is a welcome addition to the seemingly ever-growing literature on the land question in the Victorian and Edwardian period. Despite the proliferation of studies Dr Readman manages to break new ground in an interesting way. The author has built a reputation with a series of important articles in leading journals and has recently edited a volume on the *Land Question in Britain, 1750–1914* with Professor Matthew Cragoe. This book has been long anticipated and, although it stems from his Cambridge Ph.D., it has been extensively revised and extended, so much so in fact that it can scarcely be said to be the traditional 'book of the thesis'. As is noted here the 'land question' has often been seen in a simplistic way as the preserve of the 'Celtic peripheries' of the United Kingdom. Readman's success is to tie the traditional literature on the land question to another area of increasing scholarly concern – Englishness.

The book is divided into two sections: 'Land Politics and National Issues' and 'Land Politics and Visions of England'. The principal source is a very close reading of the massive contemporary literature on issues relating to land and agrarian questions. Few scholars can have mined this vast seam with so much depth and attention to detail. This is not a study of legislation or the practical implementation of land reform schemes: it is a book about political ideas and language. The argument is firmly embedded in recent work in political history

which emphasises the language and rhetoric used by politicians; he argues that 'the languages of land politics ... spoke to patriotic visions closely connected to English national identity' (p. 39). An important point which emerges from Readman's closely argued text is that land reform, although often seen as a radical device for the reordering of society, could be put to more conservative purposes. In itself this is not an original point but it is developed here in a much more sophisticated way than in earlier studies. This conservative approach was not only embodied in the policy of 'peasant proprietorship', but also in an important change in Conservative ideology as the party moved away from its traditional basis as the defender of the landed aristocracy.

This argument will be familiar to readers of Readman's articles on Lord Winchelsea and Jesse Collings but it is more fully fleshed out here. The question that a reader of this volume might ask is whether, despite the elegance of the argument, the land question can be seen in national terms, whether English, Irish or, indeed, Scottish. On the radical side, of course, many land reformers argued that the social and economic injustices which were predicated on a system of concentrated private ownership of land were generic. This does not mean that English, as Scottish, land reformers were not able to tap into powerful currents in their national histories to argue these general points in a national context, and this is fully brought out. Of greater interest, perhaps, is the way in which connections between the land question and social stability are brought out in great detail and sophistication. In the conclusion it is argued that there was an insularity to the English land question and that the imperial dimension was less prominent than in Scotland or Ireland. In making this point Readman indicates a possible direction of future research, although there has been some work on the export to the empire of ideas of land reform. Although this reviewer was quite surprised to read that his work had 'demonstrated' that the Scottish land question was 'parochial' rather than 'national' and had been largely settled by the late 1880s (p. 212) there is much here that the Scottish historian can gain from. Perhaps we have been too concerned with empirical studies of legislation or estate-management to the detriment of analysis of the intellectual background of the debate on the land question, although Kirsteen Mulhern's recent thesis on the eighth duke of Argyll provides a starting point for a different direction.

Much of the contemporary literature which Readman draws on here could be utilised by a future scholar of the ideas and language of the debate on the land question in Scotland. Whether or not the implicit challenge laid down by Paul Readman is accepted, all scholars with an interest in the land question and the nature of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century politics in its Scottish context should pay very careful attention to his important book.

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Custom and Conflict in the 'Land of the Gael': Ballachulish, 1900–1910.

By Neville Kirk. Pp. x, 172.

ISBN: 9780850365702.

Monmouth: The Merlin Press, 2007. £25.00.

This is a fascinating case study into strikes, lockouts and industrial unrest in the slate quarries at Ballachulish in the Edwardian era. I should declare an interest at the outset. My grandfather, Paul MacInnes was among the quarriers locked out in the celebrated dispute of 1902–3 who were given work by a sympathetic